

REVIEW: *Trap* is a Comedy

Adding to M. Knight Shyamalan's so-called divisive repertoire, *Trap* certainly stirs up a crock of ambivalence. Tracing the downfall from his Oscar-nominated film *The Sixth Sense*, Shyamalan's films have become hungry for a talkability after the credits roll, while not delivering onscreen themselves. Most of his catalogue in the past decade consists of flimsy plots propped up by fairly decent actors, all eventually crumbling as the gratuitous twists fail to land. Admittedly, *Split* and *The Visit* are not downright terrible, but which comeback will see Shyamalan on the upward rather than basking in a pool of mediocrity?

The director's latest effort, since his 2023 flop *A Knock at the Cabin*, *Trap* takes on a fresh precinct for its arguably clever plot to play out. An arena stadium hosts the most epic concert tour to date for pop princess du jour, Lady Raven. Sound familiar? It's as if Shyamalan watched too many concert films this year and thought "what if this was a horror?" Die-hard Lady Raven fan Riley, and her father Cooper Adams manage to snag tickets to a one-off matinee performance. The Eras Tour of the Shyamalan universe is however a sting operation. Cooper just so happens to be FBI hunted serial killer "The Butcher".



It's a timely and refreshing concept vying for the attention of movie-goers, young and old. The film even pairs Shyamalan with his own daughter, Saleka, cast as the fictional popstar. In this new exercise of blatant nepotism, Saleka, however, is talented. Writing 14 new songs for the film, I did find her performances and musical abilities deserving. Albeit her casting does dim the integrities of the film which may not have otherwise been made were Shyamalan's daughter not an upcoming artist in an increasingly anti nepo baby industry. Regardless, Shyamalan's own cameo as one of Lady Raven's employees is either a self-aware gag or exactly the opposite, which in itself, is hilarious.

The plot waddles between Gen Z mimicry and lazy conflict as we see Cooper evade the trap and his daughter live out her teenage fantasies. Juxtaposing Cooper's interior panic with tongue-in-cheek depiction of zoomers somehow settles the film in its own ridiculousness. However, as the trap becomes bolder and bigger, moving into the land of the living and outside of the concert, the narrative and its characters are stretched beyond their abilities rendering the whole premise a lot less plausible with only 30 minutes of runtime left to recover.

Once Cooper has escaped for the umpteenth time, *Trap* becomes laughable. Its saving grace is Cooper himself, played by Josh Hartnett. While he doesn't quite fit the role of serial killer or fun-loving dad, he somehow excels at becoming both, propelling the plot further with his alluring onscreen presence beyond its clumsy screenplay.

As Cooper's unrelentingly search for escape continues into the credits, we arrive at no apparent conclusion and frankly, confusion. If not taken too seriously, *Trap* is enjoyable and certainly feeds the appetites of the post-ironic generation. Perhaps this has been Shyamalan's intention from the get-go, satirical thrillers that have only needed a change in the zeitgeist to be taken for what they are – a barrel of laughs.